

The Patch – Transdermal Contraception

How the patch works:

The birth control patch is a thin, stick-on, square, 1-3/4 inch patch that allows hormones to enter the bloodstream through the skin. Like birth control pills, a combination of hormones in the patch stops your body from releasing an egg, so no egg can be fertilized. The hormones also cause the liquid at the opening of the uterus to thicken, which can stop sperm from getting into the uterus.

How to use the patch:

The patch is a once-a-week method of birth control on a 4 week cycle. A new patch must be used each week for 3 weeks. Bleeding is expected during the 4th week when no patch is used.

The patch is placed on healthy skin on the abdomen, buttock, lower back, upper outer arm or upper torso where it will not be rubbed by tight clothing.

It is replaced on the same day of the week for 3 weeks. The 4th week is patch-free. There should never be more than a 7-day patch-free time between patches.

Follow the written instructions that come with the patch.



Center for Health Training

1809 Seventh Avenue, Suite 400

Seattle, WA 98101-1341

206.447.9538 tel

206.447.9539 fax

www.centerforhealthtraining.org website

seattle@jba-cht.com email



Effectiveness:

Because this method of birth control is relatively new, the research for effectiveness rates is not as extensive as for other hormonal methods. Currently, the perfect use effectiveness rate is 99%; fewer than 1 woman out of 100 will get pregnant when using the patch the correct way. There may be an increased risk of pregnancy for women who weigh over 200 pounds.

Benefits of the patch:

The patch is small, thin and smooth and can be worn under your clothes. You only have to change it once a week and you can wear it in a different place each week. It stays on while you shower, bathe, swim or exercise. Warm, humid conditions do not decrease its sticking power.

Potential side effects and disadvantages:

The side effects may include breast tenderness, nausea, headache, menstrual cramps and abdominal pain. They can also include skin reactions where the patch is placed.

Using the patch will not give you protection against HIV (AIDS) or sexually transmitted infections (STIs) such as chlamydia, herpes, genital warts, gonorrhea, hepatitis B and syphilis.

Potential risks:

Some women should not use the patch because of specific health conditions. If a woman has a history of cardiovascular disease, it is recommended that she not use the patch. Ask your health provider.

Cigarette smoking increases the risk of serious cardiovascular (blood clot, heart attack, stroke) side effects, especially for women over 35. Women who use combination hormonal contraceptives are strongly advised not to smoke.

Where can you get the patch?

The birth control patch requires a prescription from a qualified health provider. Call your local health department, family planning agency or Planned Parenthood for information.